CHAPTER X

THE TRANSFORMATION WROUGHT BY THE IMPACT OF THE OCCIDENT

THE EMPIRE IS SHAKEN BY WARS WITH WESTERN EUROPEAN POWERS AND THE RESULTING TREATIES AND BY INTERNAL REBELLION (A.D. 1839-1860)

INTRODUCTORY

As has been suggested several times, we now come to the period of the greatest revolution in Chinese institutions and culture of which we have record. What changes may have been wrought in the dim ages before the Chou dynasty we do not know. We do know, however, that not during the centuries whose main features we are able to reconstruct with some degree of assurance had there been such a thorough-going shattering of the structure of the nation's life. Eras of marked transition there had been. Of these, the chief were the chaos toward the end of the Chou, out of which emerged the imperial structure of the Ch'in and the Han, and the centuries of disorder and invasion, with the accompanying influx of Buddhism, which succeeded the downfall of the Han. In neither period, however, had the overturn of the ui< heritance from the past been so nearly complete as it has in these opening decades of the twentieth century. The end is not yet in sight and still further disintegration may be in store before there emerges a new structure with some promise of stability.

Up to the nineteenth century, the current of Chinese history had moved on without such marked disturbances as had punc-

tuated that of the Occident. One dynasty succeeded another, each being founded by a successful warrior, and each, after a shorter or longer period, declining, its close marked by rebellions and civil chaos, and, frequently, invasions from the north. Then, after disunion of brief or prolonged duration, followed a new dynasty and a repetition of the story with comparatively unimportant